

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1-42 (Canceled)

43. (New) A shield apparatus in combination with a cutting mechanism of a power vegetation trimmer for preventing or at least minimizing contact between vegetative matter and a rotating output shaft of the vegetation trimmer, the cutting mechanism of a type comprising a cutting element location disposed along a transverse axis for positioning of a cutting element, the shield apparatus comprising:
- (a) a first lateral wall coaxially disposed about a central axis and comprising a radial dimension relative to the central axis;
  - (b) a first transverse shield wall transversely disposed relative to the central axis and adjoining the first lateral wall wherein the first lateral wall extends from the first transverse shield wall in a first direction toward the transverse axis and terminates above the transverse axis of the cutting mechanism, the first transverse shield wall comprising a first aperture coaxially disposed about the central axis to permit extension of the output shaft therethrough, wherein the first lateral wall and the first transverse shield wall define a first interior and at least partially
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overlaps at least a portion of the cutting mechanism within the first interior above the external cutting element location;

- (c) a second lateral wall coaxially disposed about the central axis on an outer side of the first transverse shield wall opposite to the first interior and extending away from the first transverse shield wall in a second direction substantially opposite the first direction, the second lateral wall comprising a second radial dimension relative to the central axis less than the first radial dimension and defining a second interior of the shield at least partially overlapping at least a portion of a head member from which the output shaft can extend;
- (d) a second transverse shield wall transversely disposed in relation to the central axis and adjoining the second lateral wall, the second transverse shield wall attached to the outer side of the first transverse shield wall and having a second aperture coaxially disposed about the central axis in general alignment with the first aperture of the first transverse shield wall; and
- (e) an adapter member for mounting to the output shaft of a vegetation trimmer for rotation therewith and for mounting the shield apparatus in non-contacting relation to the output shaft, the adapter member comprising a hollow cylindrical portion extending through the first and second apertures, a first annular adapter plate coaxially disposed around the hollow cylindrical portion and disposed in the first interior

adjacent to the first transverse shield wall, and a second annular adapter plate coaxially disposed around the hollow cylindrical portion and disposed in the second interior adjacent to the second transverse shield wall.

44. (New) A shield apparatus in combination with a cutting mechanism of a power vegetation trimmer for preventing or at least minimizing contact between vegetative matter and a rotating output shaft of the vegetation trimmer, the cutting mechanism of a type comprising a cutting element location disposed along a transverse axis for positioning of a cutting element, the shield apparatus comprising:
- (a) a first lateral wall coaxially disposed about a central axis and comprising a radial dimension relative to the central axis;
  - (b) a first transverse shield wall transversely disposed relative to the central axis and adjoining the first lateral wall wherein the first lateral wall extends from the first transverse shield wall in a first direction toward the transverse axis and terminates above the transverse axis of the cutting mechanism, the first transverse shield wall comprising a first aperture coaxially disposed about the central axis to permit extension of the output shaft therethrough, wherein the first lateral wall and the first transverse shield wall define a first interior and at least partially

- overlaps at least a portion of the cutting mechanism within the first interior above the external cutting element location;
- (c) a second lateral wall coaxially disposed about the central axis on an outer side of the first transverse shield wall opposite to the first interior and extending away from the first transverse shield wall in a second direction substantially opposite the first direction, the second lateral wall comprising a second radial dimension relative to the central axis less than the first radial dimension and defining a second interior of the shield at least partially overlapping at least a portion of a head member from which the output shaft can extend;
  - (d) a hollow cylindrical portion disposed in the second interior in alignment with the first aperture for attachment to the output shaft of a vegetation trimmer and for mounting the shield apparatus coaxially about the output shaft; and
  - (e) a coaxial adapter wall coaxially disposed around the cylindrical portion.
45. (New) A shield apparatus in combination with a cutting mechanism of a power vegetation trimmer for preventing or at least minimizing contact between vegetative matter and a rotating output shaft of the vegetation trimmer, the cutting mechanism of a type comprising a cutting element location disposed along a transverse axis for positioning of a cutting element, the shield apparatus comprising:

- (a) a first lateral wall coaxially disposed about a central axis and comprising a radial dimension relative to the central axis;
- (b) a first transverse shield wall transversely disposed relative to the central axis and adjoining the first lateral wall wherein the first lateral wall extends from the first transverse shield wall in a first direction toward the transverse axis and terminates above the transverse axis of the cutting mechanism, the first transverse shield wall comprising a first aperture coaxially disposed about the central axis to permit extension of the output shaft therethrough, wherein the first lateral wall and the first transverse shield wall define a first interior and at least partially overlaps at least a portion of the cutting mechanism within the first interior above the external cutting element location;
- (c) a second lateral wall coaxially disposed about the central axis on an outer side of the first transverse shield wall opposite to the first interior and extending away from the first transverse shield wall in a second direction substantially opposite the first direction, the second lateral wall comprising a second radial dimension relative to the central axis less than the first radial dimension and defining a second interior of the shield at least partially overlapping at least a portion of a head member from which the output shaft can extend; and
- (d) an adapter member for mounting to the output shaft of a vegetation trimmer for rotation therewith and for mounting the shield apparatus in

non-contacting relation to the output shaft, the adapter member comprising a hollow cylindrical portion extending through the first aperture, a first annular adapter plate coaxially disposed around the cylindrical portion and disposed in the first interior, and a second annular adapter plate coaxially disposed around the cylindrical portion and disposed in the second interior.